

*Comments Received from Local Governments Relative to the Public-Private Transportation Act Project for Improvements to the Interstate 81 Corridor in Virginia*

As part of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) review of the two detailed proposals for improvements to the Interstate 81 corridor, comments were solicited from affected local jurisdictions. VDOT distributed letters to 29 jurisdictions along the corridor describing the role of local jurisdictions in the PPTA procurement process and providing an example format for their use in supplying comments. The proposing teams have also had contact with jurisdictions along the corridor. No less than 46 jurisdictions were contacted either by VDOT, one of the proposing teams, or some combination of the three. Of these, 23 have provided comments to date. Additionally, comments have been received from five other jurisdictions not among those contacted as indicated above, resulting in a total of 28 jurisdictions that have provided comments as of this date.

The comments have been sent to VDOT in three different formats – letters, resolutions, and comment sheets following the example provided by VDOT. The distribution among these formats has been even.

Of the comments received, the single most frequent comment expressed the desire that rail improvements, including both passenger and freight, be given more consideration. 65% of those responding expressed this desire.

The next most frequent comments expressed by the localities were related to the use of tolls to fund the project. Shared by 25% of the responses was the opposition to the use of tolls to fund the project. 18% of the responses also expressed concern for the impact of tolls on either the region or industries. 14% indicated an opposition to tolls on local traffic, with some referring to local traffic as travel of less than 50 miles. Two other comments also dealt with the issue of tolls, each shared by 10% of the localities. Diversion of traffic to other roadways was one of the concerns. The other expressed concern over having to pay tolls for improvements when they are already paying taxes that being used to fund roadway improvements in other parts of the state, resulting in what they are referring to as double taxation.

14% of the responses indicated that they oppose both proposals and requested that VDOT reject them.

Comments requesting that the scenic viewsheds and beauty of the corridor be protected, indicating a preference for the STAR proposal, requesting that collector-distributor lanes be included in the Frederick County area, or requesting that public hearings be held prior to an agreement is signed each were included on 10% of the responses.

Each of the remaining comments was included on less than 10% of the responses. These remaining comments are as follows:

- request more information regarding the right of way impacts of the proposed rail improvements;
- request more information regarding the impacts from increased trains on issues such as the safety at crossings and the corresponding emergency response needs;
- support the concept of improvements or believe improvements are needed; believe bonds should be repaid with tax revenues or that fuel taxes should be increased;
- indicating a preference for the Fluor proposal; are concerned with the impacts to the Agricultural Forest Districts;
- believe the impacts to economic development and tourism during construction will be negative;
- expressed concern that current code does not permit tolls on passenger vehicles;
- desire an explanation of the non-competitive covenant included in the STAR proposal;
- concerned with funding of future maintenance and improvements on I-81;
- addressed specific improvements that were desired such as drainage improvements, automated stationary signal horns, at-grade crossings and interchange upgrades, relocations or construction;
- request that the environmental impacts be evaluated thoroughly; request that rest areas be included throughout the corridor;
- suggest that VDOT issue a new RFP specifically requesting rail improvements;
- suggest that VDOT reject federal funding that makes requirements of VDOT;
- suggest that VDOT work with the local governments in the design of the storm water management facilities;
- suggest that VDOT work with landowners to minimize impacts to businesses;
- suggest that VDOT defer action on the proposal until the Department of Rail and Public Transportation completes its market study.

Compilation of the responses that utilized the suggested comment format provided by VDOT is indicated below.

COMMENTS FOR PROPOSAL BY STAR SOLUTIONS

Are the proposed improvements compatible with any local comprehensive plans that exist for your locality? 8 - YES; 7 - NO

Does this proposal, on its own merits, warrant consideration by VDOT's Commissioner for negotiation of a comprehensive agreement? 7 - YES; 4 - NO

Are there portions of this proposal that create specific advantages and/or benefits for your locality? 7 - YES; 4 - NO

Are there portions of this proposal that create specific disadvantages and/or drawbacks for your locality? 12 - YES; 0 - NO

COMMENTS FOR PROPOSAL BY FLUOR SOLUTIONS

Are the proposed improvements compatible with any local comprehensive plans that exist for your locality? 9 - YES; 7 - NO

Does this proposal, on its own merits, warrant consideration by VDOT's Commissioner for negotiation of a comprehensive agreement? 5 - YES; 6 - NO

Are there portions of this proposal that create specific advantages and/or benefits for your locality? 7 - YES; 5 - NO

Are there portions of this proposal that create specific disadvantages and/or drawbacks for your locality? 12 - YES; 0 - NO